



The Ideal Self and State Authenticity

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Abstract

The current study investigated the effect of priming people with alignment or distance to ideal self attributes on their feelings of authenticity. The effect of priming participants with *self-irrelevant* alignment or distance to ideal attributes was also explored, to test whether these manipulations might respectively increase or lower state authenticity, or whether state authenticity would only be affected by self-relevant priming. As expected, discrepant conditions were associated with lower state authenticity than non-discrepant conditions. Participants primed with self-relevant alignment to ideal self attributes felt more authentic than participants in any other condition, a relationship which was partially mediated by negative affect. Contrary to expectations, participants in the self-relevant discrepant condition experienced *more* authenticity, on average, than participants in the self-irrelevant discrepant condition, but the positive main effect of self-relevancy on state authenticity became non-significant once individual differences were added as covariates, while the interaction between self-relevancy and discrepancy became significant. The study is consistent with the idea that we feel more like our *real* selves when we feel more like our *ideal* selves.

Keywords: authenticity, state authenticity, self, ideal self.

Introduction

We are often urged to be true to ourselves, and yet the experimental literature on authenticity is scarce. The subject of authenticity has been discussed by psychologists belonging to psychoanalytic and humanistic traditions, such as Horney (1950), Rogers (1961), and Maslow (1968), and by philosophers, such as Sartre (1943), but in experimental psychology the study of authenticity is still young.

However, there are indications that a better understanding of the experience – and tendency to experience – authenticity would be valuable. People are strongly motivated to experience authenticity and avoid experiencing inauthenticity (Lenton, Bruder, Slabu, & Sedikides, 2011). Moreover, measures of trait authenticity – the enduring disposition to feel authentic – correlate with positive outcomes and characteristics, such as life satisfaction and subjective well-being (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, & Joseph, 2008). Individuals high in trait authenticity were found to be more likely to be satisfied with their relationships (Brunell et al., 2010) and to engage in behaviours considered to be adaptive such as mindfulness, low verbal defensiveness and problem-focused coping (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Wood et al. (2008) point out that, compared with other character strengths, their measure of authenticity is a very strong predictor of life satisfaction. It is too early to say, however, whether authenticity causes well-being and life satisfaction, or whether the direction of causality is mostly in the other direction.

In psychology, authenticity has mostly been conceptualised as a trait, an enduring characteristic (e.g. Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008). Kernis and Goldman (2006), for example, describe it as “the unobstructed operation of one’s true – or core – self in one’s daily enterprise” (Kernis & Goldman, 2006, p. 294) and Harter (2002) characterises authenticity as the combination of self-knowledge – “Know thyself” as inscribed in the Temple of Apollo – and acting in accordance with one’s inner thoughts and feelings – “To thine own self be true,” as Polonius advises Laertes in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*.¹ The current study, which explores the relationship between actual/ideal discrepancies priming and state authenticity, follows an alternative approach, as its focus is on the *experience* of authenticity, and how the situation might affect our feelings of authenticity or lack of authenticity.

¹ This is the meaning these well-known phrases have acquired, but it seems that Polonius actually meant Laertes should not act in a way that would go against his best interests (Macrone, 2007), and, before Socrates, to “Know thyself” was probably intended as a reminder not to boast without reason (Roth, 2002).

Lenton et al. (2011) recently conducted a series of studies exploring the phenomenology of state authenticity, i.e. they investigated how “the experience of being one’s true self” feels (Lenton et al., 2011, p. 2). By asking participants to report on the frequency with which they experienced authenticity and inauthenticity, Lenton et al. found that the experience of authenticity and inauthenticity are not ‘default’ states, rather experiences that occur weekly or monthly. Feelings of authenticity and inauthenticity were reported both by people high and low in trait authenticity, so it seems that, in most cases, even people high in trait authenticity feel inauthentic from time to time, and even people low in authenticity are likely to experience moments of authenticity. In a different study, participants were asked to provide narratives of events during which they felt most like their true selves/least like their true selves. Lenton et al. found that the experience of authenticity is especially likely to occur in social settings and that trait authenticity did not moderate most of the differences between the narratives.

Earlier studies by Heppner et al. (2008), Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne and Ilardi (1997), and Fleeson and Wilt (2010) also suggest that feelings of authenticity might vary with the situation. In Heppner et al.’s (2008) diary study, participants reported daily on their felt authenticity, as well as their need satisfaction (for autonomy, competence and relatedness), self-esteem, and affect. Felt authenticity was positively correlated with autonomy, competence and relatedness need satisfaction, even when positive and negative affect were controlled for.

Sheldon et al. (1997) found that people seem to feel more or less authentic depending on what role they are playing. Participants in their study were asked to rate themselves on a number of traits, both in general and with respect to several distinct roles (student, employee, child, friend and romantic partner). Participants then responded to a series of questions designed to measure their authenticity and well-being within the various roles. The results showed that participants’ felt the most authentic in the roles in which they saw themselves as more extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, open to experience and emotionally stable (non-neurotic). They also found that authenticity scores were positively correlated with satisfaction within the role.

Fleeson and Wilt (2010) also found that people felt more authentic when expressing extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and emotional stability. In two of their studies, participants engaged in several activities in a laboratory setting, such as playing Twister or painting. They were also asked to rate how well certain adjectives described their behaviour while engaging in the activity, and how authentic they felt during the session. The adjectives were used to infer to what degree the participants expressed extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and emotional stability during the session.

When asked to retrospect, Fleson and Wilt found that most people's intuitions about authenticity support the theory that we feel more authentic when acting consistently with our traits – the *trait consistency hypothesis*. However, the results from their two laboratory studies (and a third study they conducted outside the lab of everyday activities) supported an alternative theory, the state *content significance hypothesis*: it seems that it is the *content* of behaviour which leads people to feel authentic, rather than the extent to which those behaviours are in agreement with people's personalities. In other words, participants expected that someone high in introversion would feel less authentic when acting extroverted, but Fleson and Wilt found the opposite, that introverts acting extroverted felt *more* authentic. Situational traits were still predictive of authenticity when controlling for positive and negative affect.

A possible explanation of the results of Sheldon et al.'s (1997) and Fleson and Wilt's (2010) studies is that people tend to see extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness and emotional stability as desirable traits, or that they might think one *should* act in an extroverted, agreeable, conscientious, open and emotionally stable way. They might believe their true selves to emerge when acting in accordance with these traits, perhaps blaming their behaviour on the situation when it falls short of their ideals. To give a couple of examples, irrespective of their actual traits, people might experience feelings of authenticity when acting in an extraverted and open way during a game of Twister, as opposed to when acting disagreeably having been stopped in the street by a sales person. The feeling of being close to one's *ideal*, rather than actual self, could ironically trigger feelings of authenticity.

This proposal is consistent with a body of research showing that, in many domains, people are, on average, guilty of overestimating their positive qualities – for example, people tend to judge their relationships, health behaviours and driving ability as better than average (Buunk, 2001; Hoorens & Harris, 1998; Svenson, 1981). It is also supported by research on the self-serving bias phenomenon, the tendency explain our successes in terms of our qualities and blame our failures on the situation (e.g. Campbell & Sedikides, 1999; Wolosin, Sherman, & Till, 1973). More specifically, it is consistent with Lenton et al.'s (2011) finding that participants rated themselves as closer to their ideal selves during events when they felt more authentic than during events when they felt inauthentic.

The current study investigates whether state authenticity increases following a manipulation designed to activate participants' feelings of closeness from their ideal selves, and whether it decreases following a manipulation designed to activate their feelings of distance from their ideal selves. To investigate whether being primed with alignment to ideal attributes might increase state authenticity even if those attributes are self-irrelevant and whether being made aware of a discrepancy might decrease state authenticity even if the

discrepancy in question is self-irrelevant, self-irrelevant conditions were included in the study, as well as conditions in which alignment to ideal self attributes and actual/ideal discrepancies were primed. In other words, it was tested whether discrepancy in itself might affect state authenticity.

Priming participants with ideal self discrepancy (or alignment) could affect their feelings of authenticity through a number of intermediate variables, such as affect, self-esteem and private and public self-consciousness, i.e. as a result of the manipulation, participants might focus their attention inwards and be preoccupied with their selves, or be more aware of their public image.

There are reasons to think these variables might be related to state authenticity. Lenton et al. (2011) found that participants' descriptions of events during which they felt authentic ("most me" events) were associated with positive emotion clusters, whereas participants' descriptions of events during which they felt inauthentic ("least me" events) were associated with negative emotion clusters. They also found that participants rated "most me" events as involving greater positive affect, lower negative affect, higher self-esteem and lower private and public self-consciousness than "least me" events. Fleeson and Wilt (2010) also found a positive association between positive affect and authenticity, and a negative association between negative affect and authenticity, although the significance of the relationships was marginal, and in Heppner et al. (2008)'s study self-esteem was shown to correlate with felt authenticity.

There are findings suggesting that negative affect, in particular, is likely to increase as a consequence of self discrepancy priming. Higgins, Bond, Klein and Strauman (1986) found that priming participants with actual/ideal discrepancies increased dejected emotions, whereas priming them with actual/ought discrepancies increased agitated emotions. The technique used in the study to make participants aware of their discrepancies was to ask them to describe the kind of person that they and their parents wished they were (actual/ideal priming) or thought they ought to be (actual/ought priming).

Strauman and Higgins (1987) conducted a further study, where actual/ideal and actual/ought discrepancies were primed using a different method: participants were asked to perform a sentence-completing task, which they believed to concern other people, rather than themselves. However, some of the attributes they were provided with in the task were derived from lists the participants had previously completed of attributes they possessed, wished they possessed or thought they should possess. Mood ratings, as well as physiological and behavioural measures, showed that dejection emotions increased when participants were primed with discrepancies between their actual and ideal selves. When attributes that were

self-relevant (because they came from the participants' lists) but were not discrepant (there was no mismatch) were presented, participants did not experience increased negative affect.

The main hypotheses of the current study are that participants primed with discrepancy are expected to feel less authentic than those primed with alignment to ideal attributes, and that there will be an interaction between discrepancy and self-relevancy: participants primed with self-relevant discrepancies are expected to feel less authentic than participants primed with self-irrelevant discrepancies, and participants primed with self-relevant alignment to ideal attributes are expected to feel more authentic than participants primed with self-irrelevant alignment to ideal attributes. In light of Higgins, Bond, Klein and Strauman's (1986) and Strauman and Higgins' (1987) findings, self-relevant actual/ideal discrepancies are expected to increase negative affect. It will be investigated whether positive and negative affect, self-esteem, state private and state public self-consciousness might mediate the relationship – if there – between experimental condition and state authenticity.

Method

Participants

The study was advertised in a number of psychology websites. Participants were also recruited via e-mail invitation and social networking. Ethical approval was granted (2-1011). Participants were informed that the experiment would be anonymous, was expected to take around 20 minutes, and that participating would give them the opportunity, if they wished, to take part in a draw for Amazon vouchers.

Three hundred fifty-one participants took part in the study. Fifty-nine participants were excluded from the analyses for several reasons. Twenty-three participants were suspected of not having understood the manipulation's instructions (19 out of these 23 were excluded)², and 13 answered in a way which strongly suggested they did not take the task seriously (12 out of these 13 were excluded).

² A decision was made about each participant, depending on how clear it seemed from their answers they did not understand the manipulation/follow the instructions, or did not take the task seriously. Further analyses could be run with more stringent criteria, excluding *all* cases where there was a doubt. (For example, in six cases, it was not absolutely clear from the participants' answers whether they meant to say they or the world possessed or did not possess the attributes they listed.) Participants whose recall of the attributes they previously listed was poor could also be excluded in future analyses.

Other factors taken into consideration were how many attributes participants listed and whether their English fluency was satisfactory. All participants who listed two or fewer attributes in answer to the manipulation were automatically excluded (17 participants listed zero attributes, three listed only one, and 11 participants listed two attributes). Judging from participants' answers to the manipulation, as well as their comments, it was not felt that any participant's English fluency was poor enough to justify excluding his/her answers from the analyses (no participant rated their English fluency as less than "fair").

Two cases were suspected to have been filled out by the same person and a decision was taken to retain the results of the first survey completed by this participant, but to exclude the second. Also, four participants entered 17 as their age and were therefore excluded for being younger than 18 years-old. One participant entered '2' as their age, this case was retained as it seemed clear from the participant's other answers that it was a typo and we assumed the participant to be in their twenties.

The ages of the 292 participants (206 female, 85 male) retained for the analyses ranged from 18 to 69 years ($M = 27.05$, median = 20.50, $SD = 10.78$). Most participants came from the United Kingdom (43%) and the United States (28%), but several other countries were represented as well: Germany (4%), Italy (3%), Canada (2%), Australia (2%), Spain (1%), Slovenia (1%), and Mexico (1%), amongst others. The majority (80%) were native English speakers. Those who were not native English speakers rated their English language fluency "fair" (1%), "fair to good" (3%) or "good" (22%).

Materials and Procedures

The data was gathered through an online questionnaire entitled "My attitudes, my beliefs, my self". The questionnaire was accessible through the Project Self website (www.projectself.psy.ed.ac.uk), and was introduced by the following description: "This study aims to understand how people's attitudes and beliefs relate to their present understanding of themselves. If you participate in this study, you will be asked to describe yourself with respect to your qualities and activities. Additionally, participants will respond to a number of questions about themselves, with none of these questions touching upon particularly sensitive issues."

The study comprised three main stages: (a) individual differences; (b) manipulation; and (c) mediators and dependent variables. I will take each stage in turn.

Individual Differences. In the first stage, participants were asked to complete a number of individual difference measures. Items measuring trait authenticity, trait self-concept clarity and trait private self-consciousness were randomly interspersed. Participants

were asked to “Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you.” The scale ranged from 1 to 7 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).

Trait Authenticity Inventory. Individuals high in trait authenticity might be more likely to report higher state authenticity, because of their enduring tendency to experience authenticity. Therefore, trait authenticity was added as a covariate to the main models in some of the analyses. It was also explored whether trait authenticity moderated the relationship between condition and state authenticity.

This study used the 3rd version of the Trait Authenticity Inventory (AI-3), developed by Goldman and Kernis (2004), as cited in Kernis and Goldman (2006). The 45-item scale is based on an understanding of authenticity as having the following four components: (a) awareness of one’s thoughts and feelings (e.g. “For better or for worse I am aware of who I truly am.”); (b) unbiased processing of these feelings, i.e. the absence of mechanisms such as denial, distortion and exaggeration (e.g. the reversed item “I find it very difficult to critically assess myself.”); (c) behaving in accordance with one’s thoughts and feelings (e.g. “I rarely if ever, put on a “false face” for others to see.”); and (d) having a relational orientation, i.e. wanting – and succeeding in having – open and sincere relationships (e.g. “I want people with whom I am close to understand my weaknesses.”).

The Trait Authenticity Inventory was found to have high test re-test reliabilities (.87) and to be inversely correlated with defensiveness, and positive correlated with mindfulness, problem-focused coping, life satisfaction, well-being and self-esteem (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), which suggests the scale has construct validity.

In the current study, items from the Trait Authenticity Inventory had an overall internal consistency of $\alpha = .906$.

Self-Concept Clarity. Individuals with a clear and stable self-concept could be less affected by the manipulation, therefore a measure of self-concept clarity was included in the surveys. However, because trait authenticity and self-concept clarity turned out to be very highly correlated, $r(246) = .75, p < 0.01$, self-concept clarity was not included in the main analyses.

Campbell et al.’s (1996) Self Concept Clarity scale consists of 12 items, measuring the tendency to have clear, internally consistent and stable self-beliefs (e.g. the reversed item “On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion.”). The developers demonstrated that the scale is internally consistent (e.g., test re-test reliabilities between .79 and .70) and possesses convergent validity with self-esteem (.61), neuroticism (-.64) and negative affect (-.50). It was modestly correlated with private self-consciousness (.27) and public self-consciousness (-.26).

In the current study, self concept clarity items had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .87$.

Private Self Consciousness. The overall relationship between trait private self-consciousness, the experimental condition and state authenticity in the current study could be quite complex. On one hand, it is possible that individuals high in self-focus might have greater self-knowledge, because of their tendency to focus inwards. We might therefore expect them to experience more authenticity, as self-knowledge is central to many characterisations of authenticity (e.g. Harter, 2002; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Wood et al., 2008).

On the other hand, there are also reasons to expect trait private self-consciousness to be negatively related to trait and consequently state authenticity. Self-consciousness has been associated with increased negative affect, and in particular with depressive and anxiety symptoms (e.g. Mor & Winquist, 2002), a relationship that Mor and Winquist concluded to be probably reciprocal, as there are studies supporting both directions of causality (e.g. Ingram, Cruet, Johnson, & Wisnicki, 1988; Salovey, 1992; Green, Sedikides, Saltzberg, Wood, & Forzano, 2003).

Moreover, Duval and Wicklund (1972) argued that individuals high in trait private self-consciousness tend towards self-criticism and there is evidence that trait private self-consciousness is linked with lower self-esteem (Turner, Scheier, Carver, & Ickes, 1978).

Self-consciousness has also been associated with individual differences in self-referent encoding (Hull, van Treuren, Ashford, Propsom, & Andrus, 1988), so it is possible that self-consciousness may act as a moderator in the current study, perhaps amplifying the effects of self-relevancy. However, priming has also been showed to have weaker effects in participants high in self-focus (Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 2000).

Fenigstein, Scheier and Buss's (1975) Private Self-consciousness Scale consists of 10 items measuring the private aspect of self-consciousness (e.g. "I reflect about myself a lot."). The private self-consciousness scale has been shown to have test re-test reliability of .79 (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Carver and Glass (1976) showed it to have discriminant validity with several variables.

In the current study, private self-consciousness items had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .67$.

Manipulation. The study was initially piloted with a different neutral condition: participants were asked to "Please list five things you have done today. For example, one activity might be, 'Today I had a cup of tea'." This was changed, because it was decided it was not sufficiently self-concept neutral, based on some the attributes participants in the pilot study listed, such as "Wrote a short story" and "I helped my roommate study for a test". It

seemed possible that reflecting on their day might make some participants reflect on their selves (even if they would have not been primed to think of their self-ideals), so an alternative neutral condition was developed.

To investigate whether discrepancy in itself might affect state authenticity two self-irrelevant conditions – one discrepant and one not discrepant – were included in the study, as an additional control. In these conditions, participants were primed with alignment or discrepancies relative to their ideals about the world.

Participants were randomly allocated to 5 conditions, containing the following instructions:

- **Neutral:** Please list 5 adjectives that could be used to describe a *garden*.
- **Self-concept relevant non-discrepant:** Please describe 5 ways in which you *are* just as you would like to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish you were, or how you ought to be). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which your *real self* is **the same** as your *ideal self*. For example, one might write: “My ideal self is optimistic and I consider myself truly to be optimistic.”
- **Self-concept relevant discrepant:** Please describe 5 ways in which you are *not* as you would like to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish you were, or how you *ought* to be). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which your *real self* is **not** the same as your *ideal self*. For example, one might write: “My ideal self is optimistic and I don't consider myself truly to be optimistic.”
- **Self-concept irrelevant non-discrepant:** Please describe 5 ways in which the world is just as you would like it to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish it were). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which the *real world* is **the same** as your *ideal world*. For example, one might write: “Ideally, the world would be inspiring, and I believe that our world truly is inspiring.”
- **Self-concept irrelevant discrepant:** Please describe 5 ways in which the world is *not* as you would like it to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish it were). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which the *real world* is **not** the same as your *ideal world*. For example, one might write: “Ideally, the world would be inspiring, and I believe that our world is not inspiring.”

The decision that participants should list 5 items (5 adjectives or 5 ways, depending on the condition) was motivated by research on ease of retrieval (e.g. Raghubir & Menon, 2005). Schwarz et al. (1991) showed that the perceived difficulty of a recall task influences people's judgements. For example, participants asked to recall a large number of instances when they acted assertively (12 instances), rated themselves as less assertive than participants asked to

recall a smaller number of instances (6 instances). So, in the present study, by asking participants to recall only 5 items, it is expected participants will assimilate rather than contrast away from the list. That is, they will tend to feel closer to their ideal selves in the self-relevant non-discrepant condition and more distant to their ideal self in the self-relevant discrepant condition. Research by Raghurir and Menon (1998) suggests ease/difficulty of retrieval is informative for self-judgements, but does not affect self-irrelevant judgements, so ease of retrieval may not play an important role in the self-irrelevant conditions.

Desirability/importance rating. After the manipulation, participants in the neutral condition were asked to “Please indicate how desirable it is for a garden to have the characteristics listed above.” (1 = Not at all 7 = Extremely) Participants in the self-relevant conditions were asked to “Please indicate how important it is to you that you possess the ideal characteristics listed above,” and those in the self-irrelevant conditions to “Please indicate how important it is to you that the world possess the ideal characteristics listed above.” This helped to check whether conditions differed significantly in terms of how much the task made reference to things that mattered to participants.

Difficulty rating. Participants were then asked “How difficult was it to think of 5 items for the task above?” (They could tick one of these options: “Very easy”, “Easy”, “A little easy”, “Neither easy nor difficult”, “A little difficult”, “Difficult”, “Very difficult.”) Again, this was to check whether the conditions differed significantly in terms of the difficulty of the task, and especially to assess the risk that participants in the non-discrepant conditions might contrast away from the ideal attributes due to the difficulty of the tasks.

The pilot studies suggested that thinking of ways in which the self is the same as the ideal self, or the world the same as the ideal world, is harder than thinking of activities done that day or adjectives that can be used to describe a garden, but not *so* difficult that participants would be expected to feel worse in non-discrepant conditions than in the discrepant conditions.

Manipulation check. Following the difficulty rating, participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree) two statements, designed to test the effect of the manipulation on how close to their ideal selves they felt: “Right now, I feel that I am the person I would like to be,” and “Right now, I don't feel like I am my ideal self.”

Mediators and Dependent Variables. Immediately following the manipulation check, participants were presented with items assessing potential mediating constructs (e.g. mood, state self-esteem, state private and public self-consciousness). Thereafter, the

dependent variables of interest were presented (for half of the participants, the circles measure came first, while for the other half the scale measure came first).

Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule. As discussed in the introduction, priming participants with self-relevant discrepancies was expected to increase their negative affect, in light of studies such as Strauman and Higgins's (1987). It was hypothesised that priming participants with alignment (especially self-discrepancies) would be associated with more positive affect, and priming them with discrepancies (especially self-discrepancies) would increase their negative affect. There is evidence of a link between affect and state authenticity (e.g. Lenton et al., 2011; Fleeson & Wilt, 2010; Heppner et al., 2008), so it was hypothesised that affect might mediate the relationship between condition and state authenticity, with positive emotions and lower negative emotions leading to greater state authenticity, and negative emotions and lower positive emotions leading to lower state authenticity.

The 10 statements designed to measure positive (e.g. "Right now, I feel alert") and negative affect (e.g. "Right now, I feel upset") used a list of adjectives from the Thompson's (2007) Short-Form of The Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule. Positive and negative affect items were randomly interspersed. (The longer form, designed by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988) consists of 20 adjectives.) The Short-Form PANAS has been demonstrated to have high test re-test reliability (.84 for both positive and negative affect), and convergent validity with subjective well-being and happiness (Thompson, 2007). It also seems to have cross-cultural validity, although individual country samples were small in Thompson's study.

In the current study, positive affect items had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .78$ and negative affect items an internal consistency of .83. Positive and negative affect scores were (negatively) correlated $r(288) = -.139, p = .009$, which, although significant, was not considered a correlation strong enough to justify treating positive and negative affect as part of a single measure of mood.

State Self Esteem. Self-esteem was also identified as a possible mediating variable, as it seemed possible that the self-relevant conditions would affect feelings of self-esteem (with the non-discrepant condition increasing it and the discrepant condition lowering it), and state self-esteem has been linked with state authenticity (e.g. Lenton et al., 2011; Heppner et al., 2008).

To measure state self-esteem, participants were asked to rate the following statements: "Right now, I feel valued as a person," and "Right now, I believe that I have many positive characteristics." These were based on items from the well-studied and well-validated Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1989). The self-esteem items used in the study were correlated $r(291) = .57, p < .001$.

State Private and Public Self Consciousness. Finally, state private and public self-consciousness were also identified as possible mediating variables, as it seemed possible that the self-relevant tasks would affect participants self-focus and their awareness of their public image. As I discussed above, Lenton et al. (2011) found state authenticity and both private and public self-consciousness to be negatively correlated, so it is possible that conditions associated with increased state private and public self-consciousness will also be associated with lower state authenticity. Moreover, there is evidence that state private self-consciousness is associated with more discrepant ratings between participants ideal and actual selves (Ickes, Wicklund, & Ferris, 1973), so it is possible that participants high in state private self-consciousness might be affected more strongly by the discrepant conditions.

Items measuring state private and public self-consciousness were adapted from Fenigstein et al.'s (1975) measures of trait private and trait public self-consciousness. They were adapted so that participants would rate how they felt at the present moment, rather than how they feel in general. Test re-test reliabilities of the original scales were of .79 for private self-consciousness and .84 for public self-consciousness.

The items measuring state private self-consciousness were "Right now, I feel reflective about my life," and "Right now, I'm not very aware of myself." The items measuring state public self-consciousness were: "Right now, I feel self-conscious about the way I present myself," and "Right now, I feel concerned about what other people think of me." In this study, they were respectively correlated $r(290) = .47, p < .001$ and $r(291) = .25, p < .001$. The correlation between the two state private self-consciousness items was considered too low to treat the items as measuring a single construct.

State authenticity. Two measures were used, the 'Circles' measure and a measure adapted from Wood et al. (2008)'s trait authenticity scale. To balance out order-effects, two versions of the questionnaire were created for each condition, alternating the order of the two measures.

Manipulation reminder. After completing the mediating measures items, participants were instructed to try to recall the five ways or descriptors (depending on condition) they had listed earlier. The purpose of this task was to refresh their memories of the manipulation, before the measures of state authenticity were taken.

State Authenticity 'Circles'. Participants were asked to look at an image with several pairs of circles. They were told that "In each pair, the circle on the left represents who you feel yourself to be RIGHT NOW and the circle on the right represents your REAL SELF. Your REAL SELF is who you truly are (which may not necessarily be the same as you would like to be)," and asked to select which pair of circles best represented how close they felt at

that moment to their real self. For the state authenticity measure, increasing overlap between the circles represents greater state authenticity.

This measure was developed by Lenton (2008) and was inspired by The Inclusion of Other in the Self scale (Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992), which also consists of several pairs of circles with different degrees of overlap. Theoretically, it is based on Harter's (2002) understanding of authenticity as a phenomenological experience.

Wood et al. adapted measure of State Authenticity. This consisted of 12 items adapted from Wood et al. (2008)'s measure of trait authenticity. Wood et al.'s original 12 items were designed to describe enduring characteristics, whereas the items used in this study were altered so they would describe the here and now. For example, "I always stand by what I believe in" was changed to "Right now, I feel willing to defend my beliefs if need be." The adapted version of Wood et al.'s scale used in this experiment had an internal consistency of $\alpha = .74$.

Wood et al.'s (2008) original authenticity scale has three components: self-alienation (e.g. "Right now, I'm unsure how I'm really feeling inside."), authentic living (e.g. "Right now, I'm behaving in accordance with my values and beliefs.") and accepting external influence (e.g. "Right now, the expectations of others are guiding my behaviour."). Someone who experiences a tension between their actual thoughts and feelings and their awareness of them would be high in self-alienation; authentic living involves consistency between someone's awareness of their thoughts and feelings and their behaviour; and, finally, someone high in 'accepting external influence' would have a tendency to conform to the expectations of other people. While items comprising the self-alienation subscale (e.g. "I feel out of touch with the 'real me'.") concern how it feels to be authentic or inauthentic, overall Wood et al.'s measure is more cognitive and behavioural than the Circles measure.

The original scale has been shown to possess solid test-retest reliability (ranging between .78 and .91; Wood et al., 2008), discriminant validity and convergent validity, as it correlates with measures of self-esteem and well-being.

After completing the state authenticity measures, participants responded to a short demographic survey (e.g., age, gender, nationality, self-rated English fluency). Participants were then asked a number of questions designed to assess the level of distraction they experienced during the manipulation. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to comment on the study.

Results

Design

The design of the study was experimental, with unrelated samples.

The condition factor had five levels (neutral, self-relevant non-discrepant, self-relevant discrepant, self-irrelevant non-discrepant and self-irrelevant discrepant).

As one-way ANOVAs revealed that the interaction between condition and order on state authenticity was non-significant, $F(4) = .80, p = .53$ (Wood et al. adapted measure of state authenticity), $F(4) = 1.23, p = .30$ (Circles measure of state authenticity), the order factor (i.e. the order of presentation in the survey of the two measures of state authenticity, Circles measure first or adapted Wood et al. measure first) was not included as a factor in the following analyses.

The dependent variables were the adapted Wood et al. measure of state authenticity and the Circles measure of state authenticity.

The adapted Wood et al. measure of state authenticity was treated as a single measure, because a 3 (Wood scale: self-alienation (reversed) vs. authentic living vs. accepting external influence (reversed)) by 5 (condition: neutral vs. self-concept relevant non-discrepant vs. self-concept relevant discrepant vs. self-concept irrelevant non-discrepant vs. self-concept irrelevant discrepant) mixed model ANOVA showed that the effect of the manipulation did not vary significantly between Wood sub-scales, as there was no significant interaction between condition and Wood sub-scale, $F(4) = 1.25, p = .27$.

The individual differences measured were trait authenticity, trait self-concept clarity and trait private self-consciousness, and the possible mediating variables were difficulty, importance, positive affect, negative affect, self-esteem, state private self-consciousness and state public self-consciousness.

I will take each measure of state authenticity in turn in discussing the main results of the analyses.

Table 1

State Authenticity (Adapted Wood et al. Measure) Means by Condition

Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Neutral	4.87	58	1.02
Non-discrepant self-relevant	5.50	55	1.01
Discrepant self-relevant	5.10	48	.89
Non-discrepant self-irrelevant	5.05	53	.99
Discrepant self-irrelevant	4.90	62	1.14
Self-relevant conditions	5.31	103	.97
Self-irrelevant conditions	4.97	115	1.07
Discrepant conditions	4.99	110	1.04
Non-discrepant conditions	5.28	108	1.02
Total	5.07	276	1.04

Table 2

State Authenticity (Circles Measure) Means by Condition

Condition	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>SD</i>
Neutral	4.98	61	1.61
Non-discrepant self-relevant	5.67	54	1.35
Discrepant self-relevant	5.33	48	1.53
Non-discrepant self-irrelevant	5.42	53	1.42
Discrepant self-irrelevant	5.00	63	1.49
Self-relevant conditions	5.51	102	1.44
Self-irrelevant conditions	5.19	116	1.47
Discrepant conditions	5.14	111	1.51
Non-discrepant conditions	5.54	107	1.38
Total	5.26	279	1.50

Adapted Wood et al. measure of state authenticity

Main hypotheses testing. A one-way ANOVA with pre-defined contrasts (-4 1 1 1 1, 0 -2 -2 2 2, 0 -2 2 -2 2, 0 2 -2 -2 2) showed that overall the experimental condition had a significant effect on the adapted Wood et al. measure of state authenticity, $F(4) = 3.43$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (no outliers were excluded from the analysis)³.

The contrasts analysis (see Table 3 for details) indicated that whether the condition was discrepant or non discrepant had a significant effect on state authenticity, with participants in discrepant conditions ($M = 4.99$, $SD = 1.04$) reporting lower levels of state authenticity than participants in non-discrepant conditions ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.02$).

No statistically significant interaction was found between discrepancy and self-relevancy. However, whether the condition was self-relevant or self-irrelevant had a significant effect on state authenticity, such that participants in self-relevant conditions ($M = 5.31$, $SD = .97$) showed higher levels of state authenticity than participants in self-irrelevant conditions ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.07$), something that had not been anticipated.

³ Outliers were identified by looking at studentised residuals (cases where these were greater than the absolute value of three were excluded from the relevant analyses), unusual values of Cook's distances and leverage values greater than .20 (unless too many were found, then a less stringent threshold was used).

Table 3

State Authenticity (SA) by Condition One-way ANOVA with Pre-defined Contrasts

		Non- discrepant	Discrepant	Non- discrepant	Discrepant	SA Wood et al.	SA Wood et al.	SA Wood et al.	SA Circles	SA Circles	SA Circles
	Neutral	Self- relevant	Self- relevant	Self- irrelevant	Self- irrelevant	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Neutral vs. Rest	-4	1	1	1	1	1.76	271	0.08	1.85	273	0.06
Self- relevant vs. Self- irrelevant	0	-2	-2	2	2	-2.36	271	0.02*	-1.69	273	0.09
Discrepant vs. Non- discrepant	0	-2	2	-2	2	-1.96	271	0.05*	-2.10	273	0.04*
Self- Relevancy × Discrepancy Interaction	0	2	-2	-2	2	.90	271	0.37	.02	273	0.98

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Covariate model. When trait authenticity and trait private self consciousness were z-scored and added as main effects to the original model, the effect of condition on state authenticity remained significant, $F(4) = 3.64$, $p = .007$, $R^2 = .55$ (one outlier was excluded)⁴. Whether the condition was self-relevant or self-irrelevant no longer had a significant effect on state authenticity, $t(236) = -1.65$, $p = .1$. However, this time a significant interaction was found between discrepancy and self-relevancy, $t(236) = 2.29$, $p = .02$. Whether the condition was discrepant or non-discrepant still had a significant effect on state authenticity, $t(236) = -2.32$, $p = .02$.

Potential moderators. When an individual difference variable, or a pre-manipulation variable, alters the strength of the relationship between the independent and the dependent variable, we say the variable is a moderator (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The result of the

⁴ Trait authenticity was highly correlated with self-concept clarity, $r(246) = .75$, $p < 0.01$, therefore self-concept clarity was not included in the covariate models.

ANOVA test for the interaction between the standardised trait authenticity measure and condition on state authenticity was non-significant, $F(4) = 1.18, p = .32$ (five outliers were excluded), as was the results of the test for the interaction between the standardised trait private self-consciousness measure and condition on state authenticity, $F(4) = 1.99, p = .09$ (five outliers were excluded). It was considered redundant to test the interaction between self-concept clarity and condition on state authenticity because of the high correlation between self-concept clarity and trait authenticity.

Potential mediators. Mediation occurs when an intermediate variable, or a number of intermediate variables, explains the casual relationship between two variables – or partially explains it, in the case of partial mediation. It is traditionally tested using the Baron and Kenny (1986) method, i.e. by showing (a) that the independent variable is correlated with the dependent variable, (b) that the independent variable is correlated with the mediator, (c) that the mediator affects the dependent variable, and finally, in the case of complete mediation, (d) that when the mediator is controlled for, the independent variable no longer affects the dependent variable.

The main analysis discussed above concerning the relationship between condition and state authenticity showed that, in the current study, step (a) is met. Difficulty, $F(4, 227) = 11.93, p < .01$, importance, $F(4, 278) = 16.14, p < .01$, and negative affect, $F(4, 281) = 5.26, p < .01$, stood out as possible mediators or partial mediators, as one-way ANOVAs showed them to vary as a function of condition (step (b)). Overall, condition did not significantly affect positive affect, $F(4, 284) = 1.41, p = .23$, but the comparison between self-relevant vs. self-irrelevant groups of means was significant, $t(4, 284) = -2.28, p = .02$. The effect of condition on self-esteem, state private self-consciousness and state public self-consciousness was non-significant, so these variables were not included in the mediation analyses.

The traditional Baron and Kenny (1986) method traditionally used to assess mediation runs into difficulties when the independent variable is multi-categorical, as in the current study, because, as argued by Hayes and Preacher (2011), no single parameter can be meaningfully interpreted as the total effect of a multi-categorical variable, i.e. the sum of the direct effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable plus its indirect effect on the dependent variable through the mediator. To overcome this problem, a technique known as bootstrapping was used. Bootstrapping estimates the sampling distribution of the indirect effect of a variable on another through a candidate mediating variable. Unlike the Sobel test (1982), bootstrapping does not make the assumption that the indirect effect is normally distributed (Hayes & Preacher, 2011). Shrout and Bolger (2002) recommended its use for studies with small to moderate samples. The bootstrapping macro *MEDIATE* developed by

Hayes and Preacher (2011) was used to conduct the mediation analyses. As the independent variable 'condition' was multi-categorical, it was effect-coded, and relative total, direct and indirect effects were estimated for each condition using the grand mean of all the observations as reference. (It was decided against using dummy-coding with the neutral condition as reference, because the neutral condition was actually the condition associated with the least state authenticity.)

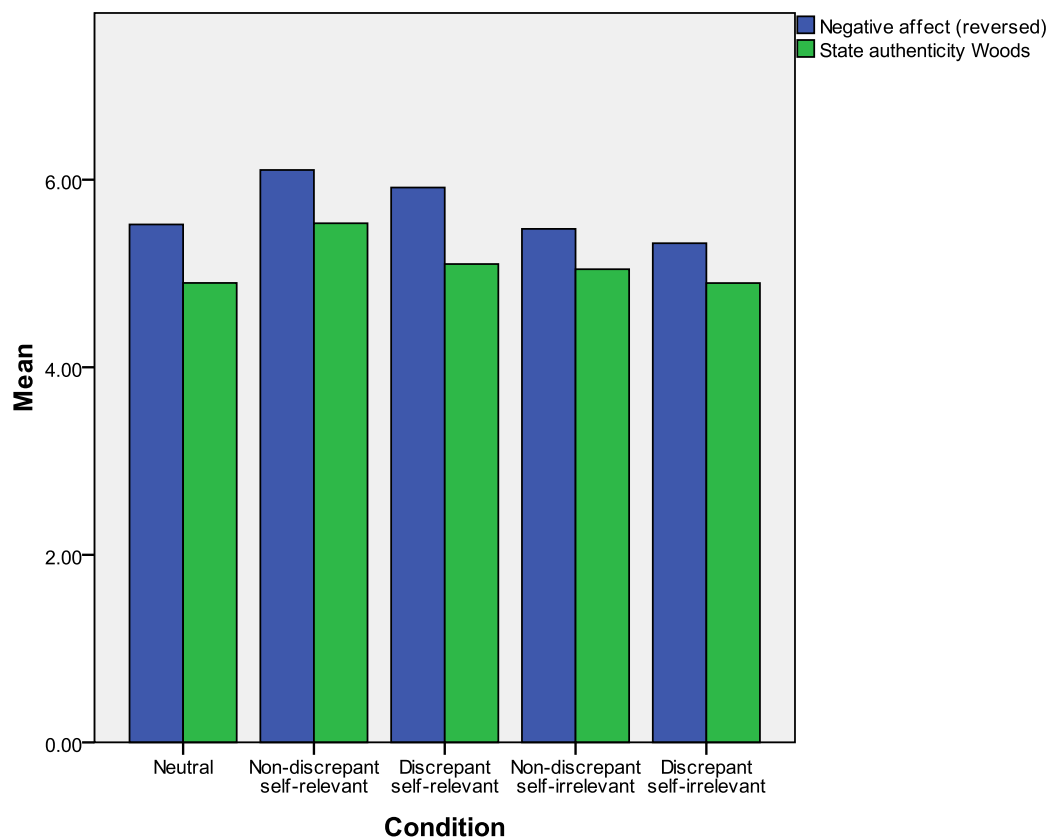
Difficulty, importance, negative affect and positive affect were entered as potential mediators, and trait authenticity and trait private self-consciousness as covariates. There was an indirect effect of .08 (SE = .04, LLCI = .02, ULCI = .17) of the self-relevant non-discrepant condition on state authenticity through negative affect with 95% confidence intervals. The indirect effects through the other candidate mediating variables were non-significant.

The self-relevant non-discrepant condition and the self-irrelevant discrepant condition had a significant effect on negative affect, which, compared with the grand mean, was lower in participants in the self-relevant non-discrepant condition, $t(6, 219) = -2.37, p = .01$, and higher in participants in the self-irrelevant discrepant condition, $t(6, 219) = 1.82, p = .07$.

Consistently with the covariate ANOVA model discussed above, the omnibus test of the total effect of condition on state authenticity was significant, $F(4, 219) = 3.93, p = .004, R^2 = .033$. The total effect of the self-relevant non-discrepant condition on state authenticity was significant, $t(6, 219) = 3.94, p = .0001$. However, the total effects associated with the other conditions were non-significant. The direct effect of the self-relevant non-discrepant condition, $t(10, 215) = 3.20, p = .0016$, and self-relevant discrepant condition, $t(10, 215) = -1.81, p = .07$, were significant, but the direct effects of both self-irrelevant conditions on state authenticity were non-significant.

To sum up, the mediation analyses showed a direct effect of the self-relevant conditions of state authenticity, i.e. the task associated with the self-relevant conditions had a significant effect on state authenticity, even when accounting for difficulty, importance, negative affect and positive affect. Negative affect, however, seems to be partially mediating the relationship between the self-relevant non-discrepant condition and state authenticity, as the indirect effect of this condition on state authenticity is different from zero with 95% confidence and has the same sign of the direct effect of the self-relevant non-discrepant condition on state authenticity.

Figure 1

Reverse-scored Negative Affect and State Authenticity (Wood et al.) Means by Condition

Circles measure of state authenticity. As above, a one-way ANOVA with pre-defined contrasts (-4 1 1 1 1, 0 -2 -2 2 2, 0 -2 2 -2 2, 0 2 -2 -2 2) showed that the experimental condition had a significant effect on state authenticity, $F(4) = 2.73, p = .03, \eta^2 = 0.04$ (one outlier was excluded from the analysis). Again, the hypothesis that participants primed with discrepancy ($M = 5.14, SD = 1.51$) would feel less authentic than those primed with alignment to ideal attributes ($M = 5.54, SD = 1.38$), was supported by the contrasts analysis (see Table 3 for more details), but no significant interaction between self-relevancy and discrepancy was found. This time, whether the condition was self-relevant or self-irrelevant did not have a significant effect on state authenticity.

Covariate model. When trait authenticity and trait private self consciousness were z-scored and added as main effects to the original model, the effect of condition on state authenticity became non-significant, $F(4) = .84, p = .50, R^2 = .21$ (two outliers were excluded). Also, none of the comparisons between conditions in the contrasts analysis remained significant.

Potential moderators. The interaction between the standardised trait authenticity measure and condition was non-significant, $F(4) = 1.12, p = .35$ (three outliers were excluded), as was the interaction between the standardised trait private self-consciousness measure and condition, $F(4) = 1.13, p = .34$ (one outlier was excluded).

Potential mediators. The same bootstrapping procedure outlined above was used to test for mediation (difficulty, importance, negative affect and positive affect were entered as potential mediators, and trait authenticity and trait private self-consciousness as covariates). None of the total and direct effects of the experimental conditions on state authenticity were significant. There was an indirect effect of .09 ($SE = .05$, $LLCI = .01$, $ULCI = .22$) of the self-relevant non-discrepant condition on state authenticity through negative affect with 95% confidence intervals. The indirect effects through the other candidate mediating variables were non-significant.

Discussion

Summary of main findings

When using one measure of state authenticity (the adapted Wood et al. measure), the hypothesis that participants primed with discrepancy would feel less authentic than those primed with alignment to ideal attributes was supported by the current study.

It was expected that participants would feel the most authentic when primed with self-relevant alignment and the least authentic when primed with self-relevant discrepancies. Instead, at first it looked as if there was a positive main effect of self-relevancy on state authenticity. However, when trait authenticity and trait private self-consciousness were added to the model as covariates, the main effect of self-relevancy became non-significant, while the interaction between self-relevancy and discrepancy became significant.

Participants primed with ideal self alignment experienced more authenticity than participants in any other conditions. The effect of ideal self discrepancies priming on state authenticity was less clear: even though discrepant conditions were significantly associated with lower state authenticity compared with non-discrepant conditions, participants in the self-relevant discrepant condition experienced, on average, more authenticity than participants in the neutral condition. They also, surprisingly, experienced more authenticity than participants in the self-irrelevant discrepant condition, although, as mentioned above, the apparent positive main effect of self-relevancy on state authenticity became non-significant when accounting for participants' individual differences.

When controlling for differences between conditions in difficulty, importance, negative affect and positive affect, and including the individual differences of trait authenticity and trait private self-consciousness as covariates, only the *self-relevant* conditions had a *direct* effect on state authenticity. Including trait authenticity and trait private self-consciousness as covariates, only the *self-relevant non-discrepant* condition had a significant *total* effect on state authenticity (compared to the conditions' state authenticity grand mean).

When using the more phenomenological Circles measure of state authenticity, it is less clear whether state authenticity was affected by the manipulation, as the differences between conditions became non-significant once covariates were added to the model.

Broader implications of the main findings

The results of the study are consistent with Lenton et al.'s (2011) finding that participants describing an event in which they felt most like their *real* self, reported a greater overlap with their *ideal* self during the event than participants describing an event in which they felt least like their real self.

Two causal stories could be told concerning Lenton et al.'s results: ideal self alignment/distance might increase/decrease authenticity; on the other hand it is also possible that the experience of authenticity or inauthenticity might be affecting people's feelings about how close they are from their ideal selves.

The results of the current study give support to the first interpretation, as priming participants with ideal self alignment affected their levels of state authenticity (when measured with the Wood et al. adapted measure). It remains possible, however, that feeling authentic or inauthentic *also* affects how close or distant people feel from their ideal self.

The finding that priming participants with alignment to ideal self attributes increased their state authenticity is also consistent with Fleeson and Wilt's (2010) theorising that authenticity is not primarily achieved by acting consistently with one's character traits. Perhaps it is when acting in accordance with one's *ideal* character traits that people feel the most authentic. Future studies could explicitly test whether this is the case, by measuring state authenticity following activities which express participant's ideal self traits.

The role of negative affect

State self-esteem, state private and state public self-consciousness were not significantly affected by the manipulation. Difficulty and importance ratings, negative affect and positive affect, however, did vary as a result of the experimental condition. The indirect effects of the experimental conditions of state authenticity through difficulty, importance and positive affect

were non-significant. However, there was a significant indirect effect of the self-relevant non-discrepant condition on state authenticity through negative affect. This was the condition with the most state authenticity and the least negative affect.

In line with Higgins, Klein and Strauman (1986) and Strauman and Higgins (1987) findings, it was expected that participants primed with discrepancies would experience more negative affect than participants primed with alignment, and it was further expected that self-relevant discrepancies be associated with the most negative affect. Even though, in this study, participants in the discrepant conditions *did* experience more negative affect than participants in the non-discrepant conditions, self-relevant conditions were associated with the least negative affect.

The self-relevant non-discrepant condition, which was associated with the *least* negative affect, and the self-irrelevant discrepant condition, which was associated with the *most* negative affect, both had a significant effect on negative affect. The self-relevant discrepant and self-irrelevant non-discrepant conditions did not. That the self-relevant discrepant condition, in particular, was not significantly associated with an increase in negative affect contradicts Higgins, Klein and Strauman's (1986) and Strauman and Higgins' (1987) previous findings.

A possible reason why the self-irrelevant discrepant condition was associated with the most negative affect is that participants may have felt there was little they could do to address the ways in which the world did not meet their expectations for an ideal world. Solving problems such as poverty and global warming is a tall order. People may, on average, have felt more optimistic about addressing their self-discrepancies, perhaps explaining why the effect of the self-relevant discrepant condition on negative affect was not significant, and (speculatively) why the total effect of this condition on state authenticity was also non-significant when covariates were included in the model.

According to Carver and Scheier (1990), negative affect has an *informational* function, giving people feedback on the speed of their progress towards reducing discrepancies. Their theory is that, when people advance towards a goal at a higher than standard speed, they will experience positive affect, whereas when their progress is slow, they will experience negative affect. What matters, according to their theory, is not the magnitude of a discrepancy, but the *rate of progress* with which the discrepancy is reduced. If the rate of progress is unsatisfactory, people might reorganise their priorities and decide to give up on the current goal, taking on a more attainable one, a process which they see as induced by negative affect. A study by Lawrence, Carver and Scheier (2002), where participants' perceptions of their rate of progress towards a goal were manipulated by providing them with false feedback, found support for Carver and Scheier's theory.

It is possible, then, that in some cases participants listed self-discrepancies they had started to address with a satisfactory rate of progress (or that they expected they could address with a satisfactory rate of progress). Perhaps this would have happened less often with world-discrepancies, where expectations about rate of progress might have been bleaker. This might explain why, contrary to expectations, negative affect was higher in the self-irrelevant discrepant condition than the self-relevant discrepant condition.

The difficulty ratings associated with the tasks might explain why the self-irrelevant non-discrepant condition failed to have a significant effect on negative affect. It seems that participants found this task the hardest, rating it on average “A little difficult” (the overall average rating across conditions was “Neither easy nor difficult”). So it is possible that some participants in the self-irrelevant non-discrepant condition contrasted away from the attributes they listed, because of the difficulty of the task, an explanation which would contradict Raghbir and Menon’s (1998) previously discussed finding that ease/difficulty of retrieval is informative for self-judgements, but does not affect self-irrelevant judgements.

The choice of self-irrelevant tasks, therefore, could be improved in future studies.⁵ Perhaps participants would find it easier, for example, to list ways in which their city/town/village (rather than the world) matches their ideals. Modifying the self-irrelevant conditions in such a way might also help with the possibility discussed above that people might feel there is more they can do to address their self discrepancies than the world discrepancies. Perhaps people feel they cannot do much to address world problems, but they might feel some power to address more local problems.

Actual/ought discrepancies

Finally, future studies could explore the relationship between actual/ought alignment/discrepancies and state authenticity and whether it differs in any meaningful way from the relationship between actual/ideal alignment/discrepancies and state authenticity explored in the current study. Higgins’ Self-Discrepancy theory (1987) concerns actual/ought discrepancies as well as actual/ideal discrepancies. Subsequent research has challenged Higgins’s distinction between actual/ideal and actual/ought discrepancies – as the two are often highly correlated – and the idea that actual/ideal discrepancies *distinctly* predict dejection, whereas actual/ought discrepancies *distinctly* predict agitation (e.g. Phillips, Silvia, & Paradise, 2007; Phillips & Silvia, 2005). As it is debatable whether actual/ought

⁵ The self-relevant non-discrepant condition was rated, on average, between “A little easy” and “Neither easy nor difficult”, i.e. it was just *below* average in difficulty, so difficulty does not seem to have been a problem in this case.

discrepancies should be considered a separate construct from actual/ideal discrepancies, actual/ought discrepancies were not primed in the current study. However, Phillips and Silvia (2010) found *some* support for Self-Discrepancy theory: in their study, actual/ideal and actual/ought discrepancies *did* emerge as separate constructs, moreover they *did* respectively predict dejection and agitation, although actual/ought discrepancies predicted dejected emotions as well as agitated emotions. Therefore, it might be informative in the future to expand the study to include ought discrepancies.

Conclusion

The current study supports the theory that we feel more like our *real* selves when we feel more like our *ideal* selves. People primed with alignment to ideal self attributes were showed to experience higher levels of state authenticity. Alignment to ideal self attributes priming also decreased negative affect, which partially explained the increase in state authenticity. Discrepant conditions were significantly associated with lower state authenticity than non-discrepant conditions, and participants primed with self-irrelevant discrepancies experienced, on average, the least authenticity and the most negative affect. Future studies could investigate whether people feel more authentic when acting in accordance with their *ideal* character traits. The effect of actual/ought alignment/discrepancies on state authenticity could also be explored.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Goldman & Kernis (2004) Trait Authenticity Inventory

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. I am often confused about my feelings. (R)⁶
2. I frequently pretend to enjoy something when in actuality I really don't. (R)
3. For better or for worse I am aware of who I truly am.
4. I understand why I believe the things I do about myself.
5. I want people with whom I am close to understand my strengths.
6. I actively try to understand which of my self-aspects fit together to form my core or true self.
7. I am very uncomfortable objectively considering my limitations and shortcomings. (R)
8. I've often used my silence or head-nodding to convey agreement with someone else's statement or position even though I really disagree. (R)
9. I have a very good understanding of why I do the things I do.
10. I am willing to change myself for others if the reward is desirable enough. (R)
11. I find it easy to pretend to be something other than my true self. (R)
12. I want people with whom I am close to understand my weaknesses.
13. I find it very difficult to critically assess myself. (R)
14. I am not in touch with my deepest thoughts and feelings. (R)
15. I make it a point to express to close others how much I truly care for them.
16. I tend to have difficulty accepting my personal faults, so I try to cast them in a more positive way. (R)
17. I tend to idealize close others rather than objectively see them as they truly are. (R)
18. If asked, people I am close to can accurately describe what kind of person I am.
19. I prefer to ignore my darkest thoughts and feelings. (R)

⁶ Reversed score item.

20. I am aware of when I am not being my true self.
21. I am able to distinguish those self-aspects that are important to my core or true self from those that are unimportant.
22. People close to me would be shocked or surprised if they discovered what I keep inside me. (R)
23. It is important for me to understand my close others' needs and desires.
24. I want close others to understand the real me rather than just my public persona or "image".
25. I try to act in a manner that is consistent with my personally held values, even if others criticise or reject me for doing so.
26. If a close other and I are in disagreement I would rather ignore the issue than constructively work it out. (R)
27. I've often done things that I don't want to do merely not to disappoint people. (R)
28. I find that my behaviour typically expresses my values.
29. I actively attempt to understand myself as best as possible.
30. I'd rather feel good about myself than objectively assess my personal limitations and shortcomings. (R)
31. I find that my behaviour typically expresses my personal needs and desires.
32. I rarely if ever, put on a "false face" for others to see.
33. I spend a lot of energy pursuing goals that are very important to other people even though they are unimportant to me. (R)
34. I frequently am not in touch with what's important to me. (R)
35. I try to block out any unpleasant feelings I might have about myself. (R)
36. I often question whether I really know what I want to accomplish in my lifetime. (R)
37. I often find that I am overly critical about myself. (R)
38. I am in touch with my motives and desires.
39. I often deny the validity of any compliments that I receive. (R)
40. In general, I place a good deal of importance on people I am close to understanding who I truly am.
41. I find it difficult to embrace and feel good about the things I have accomplished. (R)

- 42. If someone points out or focuses on one of my shortcomings I quickly try to block it out of my mind and forget it. (R)
- 43. The people I am close to can count on me being who I am regardless of what setting we are in.
- 44. My openness and honesty in close relationships are extremely important to me.
- 45. I am willing to endure negative consequences by expressing my true beliefs about things.

Appendix B: Campbell et al. (1996) Self-Concept Clarity

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. My beliefs about myself often conflict with one another. (R)
2. On one day I might have one opinion of myself and on another day I might have a different opinion. (R)
3. I spend a lot of time wondering about what kind of person I really am.
4. Sometimes I feel that I am not really the person that I appear to be. (R)
5. When I think about the kind of person I have been in the past, I'm not sure what I was really like. (R)
6. I seldom experience conflict between the different aspects of my personality.
7. Sometimes I think I know other people better than I know myself. (R)
8. My beliefs about myself seem to change very frequently. (R)
9. If I were asked to describe my personality, my description might end up being different from one day to another day. (R)
10. Even if I wanted to, I don't think that I could tell someone what I'm really like. (R)
11. In general, I have a clear sense of who I am and what I am.
12. It is often hard for me to make up my mind about things because I don't really know what I want. (R)

Appendix C: Fenigstein et al. (1975) Private Self-Consciousness

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. I'm always trying to figure myself out.
2. Generally, I'm not very aware of myself. (R)
3. I reflect about myself a lot.
4. I'm often the subject of my own fantasies.
5. I never scrutinise myself. (R)
6. I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings.
7. I'm constantly examining my motives.
8. I sometimes have the feeling that I am off somewhere watching myself.
9. I'm alert to changes in my mood.
10. I'm aware of the way my mind works when I work through a problem.

Appendix D: The Manipulation Text

Neutral condition: Please list 5 adjectives that could be used to describe a *garden*.

Self-concept relevant non-discrepant condition: Please describe 5 ways in which you *are* just as you would like to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish you were, or how you ought to be). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which your *real self* is **the same** as your *ideal self*. For example, one might write: “My ideal self is optimistic and I consider myself truly to be optimistic.”

Self-concept relevant discrepant condition: Please describe 5 ways in which you are *not* as you would like to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish you were, or how you *ought* to be). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which your *real self* is **not** the same as your *ideal self*. For example, one might write: “My ideal self is optimistic and I don't consider myself truly to be optimistic.”

Self-concept irrelevant non-discrepant condition: Please describe 5 ways in which the world is just as you would like it to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish it were). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which the *real world* is **the same** as your *ideal world*. For example, one might write: “Ideally, the world would be inspiring, and I believe that our world truly is inspiring.”

Self-concept irrelevant discrepant condition: Please describe 5 ways in which the world is *not* as you would like it to be (which is not necessarily how *others* wish it were). In other words, please describe 5 ways in which the *real world* is **not** the same as your *ideal world*. For example, one might write: “Ideally, the world would be inspiring, and I believe that our world is not inspiring.”

Appendix E: Desirability/Importance Ratings

Neutral condition: Please indicate how desirable it is for a garden to have the characteristics listed above. (1 = Not at all 7 = Extremely)

Self-relevant conditions: Please indicate how important it is to you that you possess the ideal characteristics listed above. (1 = Not at all 7 = Extremely)

Self-irrelevant conditions: Please indicate how important it is to you that the world possess the ideal characteristics listed above. (1 = Not at all 7 = Extremely)

Appendix F: Difficulty Ratings

How difficult was it to think of 5 items for the task above? (Very easy, Easy, A little easy, Neither easy nor difficult, A little difficult, Difficult, Very difficult)

Appendix G: Manipulation check

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. Right now, I feel that I am the person I would like to be.
2. Right now, I don't feel like I am my ideal self. (R)

Appendix H: Positive and Negative Affect Items

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. Right now, I feel upset.
2. Right now, I feel alert.
3. Right now, I feel hostile.
4. Right now, I feel ashamed.
5. Right now, I feel inspired.
6. Right now, I feel nervous.
7. Right now I feel attentive.
8. Right now I feel determined.
9. Right now I feel afraid.
10. Right now I feel active

Appendix I: Self-esteem Items

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. Right now, I feel valued as a person.
2. Right now, I believe that I have many positive characteristics.

Appendix J: State Private Self-consciousness Items

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. Right now, I feel reflective about my life.
2. Right now, I'm not very aware of myself. (R)

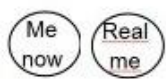
Appendix K: State Public Self-consciousness Items

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. Right now, I feel self-conscious about the way I present myself.
2. Right now, I feel concerned about what other people think of me.

Appendix L: 'Circles' Measure of State Authenticity

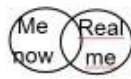
Below you will see several pairs of circles. In each pair, the circle on the left represents who you feel yourself to be RIGHT NOW and the circle on the right represents your REAL SELF. Your REAL SELF is who you truly are (which may not necessarily be the same as you would like to be). Which pair of circles best represents how close you feel at this moment to your real self?



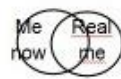
Pair A



Pair B



Pair C



Pair D



Pair E



Pair F



Pair G

Appendix M: Adapted Wood et al. Measure of State Authenticity

Please read the statements below and select a number on the corresponding scale to indicate how accurately each statement describes you. (1 = Strongly Disagree 7 = Strongly Agree)

1. Right now, I feel it is better to be myself than to be popular.
2. Right now, I'm unsure how I'm really feeling inside. (R)
3. Right now, I'm being influenced by the opinions of others. (R)
4. Right now, I feel willing to defend my beliefs if need be.
5. Right now, the expectations of others are guiding my behaviour. (R)
6. Right now, I feel out of touch with the "real me". (R)
7. Right now, I feel as if I don't know myself very well. (R)
8. Right now, I would happily follow instructions from others. (R)
9. Right now, I feel true to myself.
10. Right now, I'm feeling greatly influenced by other people. (R)
11. Right now, I'm behaving in accordance with my values and beliefs.
12. Right now, I feel distant from myself. (R)

Appendix N: Distraction Measures

1. Was anyone else with you in the room while you completed this study? (Yes/No)
2. Did anyone assist you in answering the questions in this study? (Yes/No)
3. Did you have any kind of noise in the background (e.g., music, etc.)? (Yes/No)
4. Were you doing anything else in the same time as you were completing this study (e.g., eating, reading, etc)? (Yes/No)
5. Did you have any interruptions while you were completing this study? (Yes/No)
6. If yes, please describe the nature of the interruption.
7. Please indicate how much you felt you were distracted while completing this study. (1 = Not at all 7 = Extremely)